From Megan

BALANCED STUDENT PUBLICATION POLICY PROVOKES NEW CENSORSHIP ATTEMPTS BY CFV

The November articles on gay and lesbian teens in Palmer High's student newspaper, *The Lever* has sparked a campaign by Colorado for Family Values for a Student Sexual Conduct Policy. The controversy all began when the District 11 School Board decided to revise the student publication policy in reaction to controversy surrounding the articles. The first Board meeting after the *Lever* ran the articles lasted until 1:00 a.m. to accommodate all the citizen input.

The crowd at the meeting and the many letters sent to the School Board were overwhelmingly in support of student's free speech. While the first proposed policy revision, presented at the initial Board meeting, greatly restricted student's free speech, a later draft following much input from Citizens Project and others, was far more supportive of students' freedom of expression.

However, the controversy was far from over. In January, Colorado for Family Values, the infamous architects of Amendment 2, launched a campaign for a Sexual Conduct Policy in reaction to the *Lever* articles. They focused their efforts on packing the January 15 School Board meeting and forcing the Board to consider their policy.

CFV printed their propose policy on 130,000 postcards addressed to the School Board and asked local churches to distribute them. As a result of CFV's prompting, the School Board moved their meeting to Wasson High School to accommodate more people and allowed a P.A. system to be set up to broadcast to an expected overflow crowd (Wasson auditorium holds 1,200) CFV even planned to rent a Hollywood-style "sky spotlight" to attract attention to the meeting, however the city turned down their request.

In an interesting break from tradition, on January 7 James Dobson, the leader of Focus on the Family, substituted a special interview of Perkins and others supporting this policy for his regular, national show in Colorado Springs. Dobson had never taped a show specifically targeting the Colorado Springs area previously.

Although the purpose of the School Board meeting was to discuss the student publication policy, CFV used the meeting as a forum to showcase their proposed policy, an item not even under consideration by the Board.

Approximately 700 people atended the January 15 School Board meeting, far less than CFV had hoped for, but a formidable crowd. Anywhere from a third to nearly half the crowd, however, supported the *Lever* articles and opposed Perkins' Sexual Conduct Policy. Mary Margaret Naussbaum, author of the *Lever* article, Will Perkins, Frank Whitworth from Ground Zero and Jody Alyn representing Citizens Project lead the two hours of public input. A slight majority of the approximately 20 speakers spoke in favor of the student publication policy and against Perkin's proposal.

CITY
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November 22, 1996

GAZETTE TELEGRAPH

SECT

iblical studies dropped

0 school backers creationism n't be taught

y Y. Lawton/Gazette Telegraph

onents of the first charter school in y School District 20 on Thursday pulled studies segment from their proposed um and said creationism would not be n science class.

teering committee for The Classical y backed off from these controversial t a meeting with the District 20 school board, which will decide whether the charter school will become a reality.

If the board approves the application, the back-to-basics elementary school still would be the only school in the district to stitch world religions in the official curriculum.

"That certainly would be unique," said Steve Morrison, head of curriculum for D-20. "That's one of the exciting things about charter schools. They can try something new and we can see if we can all learn something from it."

It's this revolutionary character of charter schools — funded with public school money but often free from public school rules — that has the D-20 board proceeding with caution.

A final vote on The Classical Academy was planned for Thursday, but the school board delayed the decision until Dec. 5. Board me said they wanted to have oral decisions h out in the five-hour meeting put in writin first.

Along with the religion issues, board m bers and administrators questioned every from enrollment policies to steering comm elections to student testing at the propos mentary school, which is being created fr ground up by nine area couples and Lind former principal of the Cheyenne Mounta Charter Academy.

The group came together months ago v common vision: Reviving a classical appr education. Classic literature, art and mus would be emphasized. All students would

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What's Next?

When School Board members finally expressed their point of view following public imput, it appeared that most planned to support the student publications policy. A final decision on the policy may be made at the January 29 Board meeting. Many Board members also commented on their support for the current District 11 abstinance-based policy in light of the sexual conduct policy pushed by Perkins. It remains to be seen whether Perkins can push his policy onto the agenda of a future Board meeting. If he does, we can expect many more school Board meetings with emotions running high and attendance in the hundreds.

Citizens Project's View

The School Board, by deciding to review the policy in reaction to Perkins and a handful of complaints, created a context of discouraging or preventing future articles such as those in the *Lever*. However, the School Board maintained an open door in drafting the proposed student publications policy. They listened to public opinion and kept the public well-informed of their progress.

The result was a fair student publication policy consistent with state law and appropriately protective of students' rights to free speech. Citizens Project supports the most recent student publication policy and we commend the Board for drafting a fair policy under fire. We want to support the Board in adopting this policy without further changes.

Citizens Project urges the community to come together to support the district at this time. We must support the board in focusing on immediate issues such as managing the newly awarded bond moneys and implementing state-wide standards. We must assist the Board in fulfilling the mission of public schools: providing quality education to all district students.

CFV's proposal of a Sexual Conduct Policy, an issue not even under consideration by the Board, will seriously sidetrack the School Board's work. CFV' attempt to promote their agenda, using the School Board meeting as a forum, serves only to waste the district's time and money and derail the School Board from accomplishing it's mission.

The Sexual Conduct Policy is a desperate, last ditch attempt at censorship spawned by CFV's unsuccessful attacks on the two articles in the Palmer *Lever*. Instead of limiting their attack to student publications, CFV has now broadened the reach of their censorship efforts to include all aspects of school life. This would include school libraries, curriculum decisions, classroom discussions in addition to student publications. In the process, they have accused our schools and teachers of teaching promiscuity. This is an affront to the integrity of the district.

CFV's mission is to oppose the "militant homosexual attack on traditional values" and the "forced affirmation of the homosexual lifestyle." While we don't deny CFV's concern for teenagers, they have never sought to address issues such as teenage pregnancy, gangs, family violence or promiscuity. The fact that a discussion of gay and lesbian teens, not a

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Board members work approximately 4-5 hours per month and receive no compensation for their time.

rise in teenage promiscuity, spawned the campaign for this policy points to one of CFV's objectives: censoring such dialogue in the future. (OR: While we don't deny CFV's concern for teenagers, the *Lever* articles, not a concern for teenage pregnancy, gangs, family violence or promiscuity, motivated their campaign for a sexual conduct policy. Their motivation points to one of the campaign's clear objectives: censoring such dialogue in the future.) In the end CFV's proposed policy and the manner in which they are promoting it will only hurt our schools and further polarization in our community. We urge the School Board to defend the integrity of the district by not considering this ill-concieved policy.

spoke responsibly and respectively about freedom of speech and we plan to do the same

CFV supporters who live in District 11 have every right to Colorado for Family Values, however, was not involved

District 11 has an abstinence only policy. Beyond that, families should teach their kids about sexual conduct, not the schools. Many people have family values that differ greatly with Will Perkins'.

their agenda which does not represent the majority of district residents. sidetracking district.

Colorado for Family Values has launched a campaign recent attacks on free of speech sparked by a feature story on gay and lesbian teens in Palmer High's student newspaper, *The Lever*. The School Board decided to revise the student publication policy in reaction to the controversy surrounding the article. While the first proposed policy revision greatly restricted free speech, the latest draft of the proposed student publication policy is very fair and supports students' freedom of expression.

We thought this was going to be a victory for civil liberties. Now, however, Colorado for Family Values, the infamous architects of Amendment 2, plan to use this incident and the next school board meeting to launch a campaign for their version of "traditional family values" in public schools.

CFV printed thousands of postcards to send to the School Board and distributed them at Village Seven Church. As a result of their prompting, the School Board meeting has been moved to Wasson High School to accommodate more people. It's unclear whether this is an attack on the proposed student publication policy. It is clear, though, that they want a new, separate policy to impose their views on all students in public schools.

Our Position: Citizens Project fully supports the revised student publication policy currently under consideration. We want to support the Board in adopting this policy without further changes. We **DO NOT** want to legitimize CFV's publicity stunt by addressing or countering their arguments **UNLESS** the school board puts any of their proposals on the agenda of this or future meetings. (We believe CFV may shoot themselves in the foot with this one.)

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING/PUBLIC FORUM:
6:30 p.m. January 15, Wasson H.S.
2115 Afton Way (North off Constitution between Union and Circle)

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